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Security Council

Seventy-second year

Provisional

7862nd meeting
Friday, 13 January 2017, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Skoog	(Sweden)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Soliz
	China	Mr. Zhang Dianbin
	Egypt	Mr. Kandeel
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mrs. Gueguen Mohsen
	Italy	Mr. Cardi
	Japan	Mr. Akahori
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Tumysh
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Ciss
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Wilson
	United States of America	Ms. Coleman
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez

Agenda

Peace consolidation in West Africa

Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (S/2016/1072)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Peace consolidation in West Africa

Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (S/2016/1072)

The President: In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2016/1072, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel.

I now give the floor to Mr. Chambas.

Mr. Chambas (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by wishing members a very happy 2017. It is an honour for me to once again brief the Security Council on the situation in West Africa and the Sahel. In addition to the report (S/2016/1072) of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel covering the period from 1 July to 31 December 2016, I would like to inform members of recent developments and trends and of their impact in the region.

At the outset, I would like to stress that much progress has been made since our previous meeting, in July 2016 (see S/PV.7735). In particular, the citizens of the region have shown their maturity and their willingness to freely and peacefully exercise their right to choose their leaders. By way of example, I would like to mention Cape Verde and Ghana, which carried out presidential elections in strict compliance with the norms and standards in this area, which confirmed their status as good examples in the region and beyond.

(*spoke in English*)

On 1 December 2016, voters waited patiently to cast their ballots in presidential elections in the Gambia, which took place against a backdrop of key opposition members being in prison and a communication shutdown. I shared the joy of many witnessing the announcement of the results by the Independent Electoral Commission and the concession speech by President Yahya Jammeh Babil Mansa on 2 December. Conversely, we were saddened by the quickly unfolding political crisis resulting from President Jammeh changing his mind and deciding to reject the results, citing irregularities, calling for fresh elections to be managed by a new independent electoral commission, and eventually lodging a petition aiming to invalidate the results of the 1 December polls.

On 13 December 2016, I took part in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Heads of State mission to the Gambia and, since then, have been facilitating interactions and negotiations aimed at ensuring a peaceful transfer of power from the outgoing President to President-elect Barrow. On 17 December, at the fiftieth ordinary session of its Authority of Heads of State and Government, ECOWAS agreed to uphold the results of the 1 December elections and decided to take all the necessary actions to enforce the results. UNOWAS is fully involved in supporting the ECOWAS-led mediation, which continues to explore all avenues towards a peaceful transfer of power.

A high-level delegation has returned to Banjul today, 13 January, as we meet here, in an attempt to persuade President Jammeh Babil Mansa to abide by the elections results and step down. The delegation plans to leave no doubt about the determination of ECOWAS to use all the necessary means, including force, to have the will of the Gambian people upheld. Should that be deemed necessary, ECOWAS intends to seek the endorsement of the African Union Peace and Security Council and the formal approval of the Security Council to deploy troops to the Gambia.

Despite a pre-election period that was marked at times by high political tension, the people of Ghana lived up to their reputation for organizing elections that serve as an inspiration for the rising tide of democracy throughout the African continent. I salute outgoing President John Dramani Mahama for his gracious acceptance of the results, and I congratulate President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo on his victory. While credit is due to the people of West Africa, I would also like to acknowledge the country's regional and international partners that jointly accompanied those important milestones.

In Guinea, we are concerned that the local elections, which are forecast to take place in February 2017, in accordance with the terms of the 12 October political agreement, may be postponed. There is still a lack of consensus between the ruling party and the opposition regarding the balloting system. Moreover, the amendments to the electoral code, which are needed to hold the elections in February 2017, were not adopted during the recent parliamentary session. In fact, the opposition members of Parliament withdrew from the National Assembly on the last day of its session, threatening to resume street protests. UNOWAS will continue to engage Guinean stakeholders on the imperative of implementing the provisions of the 12 October agreement.

Elsewhere in the region, a number of countries are undertaking efforts to update their Constitutions and build the foundations for prosperous, cohesive and democratic societies. In line with the ECOWAS vision of moving from an "ECOWAS of States" to an "ECOWAS of people ", UNOWAS continues to encourage these efforts to take place in a spirit of dialogue and participation.

During the reporting period, several parents in Nigeria were reunited with their daughters who had been captured by Boko Haram in the north-eastern town of Chibok approximately two years ago. Enhanced efforts are under way to release more of the abductees. Several hundred terrorists have also collectively surrendered to the authorities, due, in part, to the concerted efforts of troop-contributing countries and partners supporting the Multinational Joint Task Force.

At the same time, the group's attacks have recently become more frequent, disrupting the return of refugees and internally displaced persons to their homes. With new areas liberated, the full extent of the tragedy has become all the more visible. Hundreds of thousands of children are severely malnourished and may face starvation. While the United Nations has scaled up the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the Lake Chad basin countries, in particular in Borno state in Nigeria and Diffa province in the Niger, I am concerned that the Nigeria humanitarian response plan remains less than 37 per cent funded. Council members will agree that we can, and must, do better.

Amid increasingly vocal internal demands for peace dividends to materialize, I call upon partners to support the democratic and economic consolidation of Burkina Faso, which finds itself in the middle of a volatile regional security environment. Our aim is to ensure that post-conflict societies do not relapse into crisis, thereby hurting peace consolidation and democratic gains. Last Friday, 6 January, in neighbouring Côte d'Ivoire, it was worrisome to see former fighters who had been integrated in the armed forces try to take control of the locality of Bouaké and other cities on account of remuneration-related grievances.

Looking forward, UNOWAS will enthusiastically contribute to the implementation of resolution 2282 (2016) and the General Assembly resolution on sustaining peace. My Office is an active member of the Inter-Agency Working Group on Sustaining Peace in Burkina Faso and is contributing to the development of the sustaining peace strategy in that pilot country. My good offices and the technical-level support of UNOWAS will continue to provide support to this holistic United Nations approach in Burkina Faso and throughout West Africa and the Sahel.

My Office will also provide support on issues related to regional stabilization, including through the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel. As members are aware, the review of the integrated strategy, which the Council had mandated, was completed last year. Taking a critical look at the challenges of coordination against a shifting implementation environment, we remain committed to promoting and coordinating a holistic approach that addresses the root causes of deprivation, exclusion and insecurity.

In line with the recommendations of the report of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (see S/2015/446), the Secretary-General's report on the future of United Nations peace operations (S/2015/682),and the report of the Advisory Group of Experts on the Review of the Peacebuilding Architecture (see S/2015/490), we will continue to strengthen our collaboration with regional and subregional partners. To mention just a few examples, we have stepped up our partnership with the Group of Five for the Sahel, including by facilitating cooperation with the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force and providing support to the Group of Five regional cell on the prevention of radicalization and violent extremism.

In support of the Strategy for Cross-border Security in the Mano River Union, we have facilitated platforms where representatives of the joint border-security and confidence-building units shared experiences in order

to strengthen security and cooperation in a way that also binds youth, women and other community actors. That is but one example of an inclusive approach working together across institutions. In that regard, I call upon the member States of the Mano River Union, as well as the broader international community, to provide the minimum resources required to maintain and expand the unit's operations.

The United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel is collaborating closely with the United Nations missions in the region and, in the context of the drawdown of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire and the United Nations Mission in Liberia, we are intensifying our collaboration and information-sharing at the leadership and technical levels.

Before concluding, allow me to mention that the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission continued the emplacement of pillars for the definitive demarcation of the border between the two countries, a process that has been accompanied by confidence-building activities on both sides of the border. The Mixed Commission remains a shining example of what long-term commitment and effective cooperation can achieve.

Rest assured that my Office will redouble its efforts to prevent conflict and sustain peace in West Africa and the Sahel, always of course in collaboration with other institutions of the United Nations, ECOWAS and the wider international community.

The President: I thank Mr. Chambas for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to the member of the Council who wishes to make a statement.

Mr. Bermúdez (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, Uruguay would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Mohammed Ibn Chambas, for his briefing. At the same time, we would like to congratulate him on his work as head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel.

We furthermore wish to congratulate those countries of the region that have made a commitment to democracy and to political dialogue, such as Benin and Ghana. We also hope that the electoral process in Guinea will unfold normally over the coming months.

The role played by Senegal throughout 2016 as coordinator and mediator with respect to the crises in Mali, Guinea-Bissau and the Gambia is also worth highlighting. Furthermore, and as we expressed yesterday in this Chamber (see S/PV.7861), we welcome the progress being made in terms of security by countries in the Lake Chad basin, which have scarce resources and face a terrorist threat that is destabilizing and threatening the region. That notwithstanding, they have spared no effort in the fight, and have obtained praiseworthy results. Nevertheless, the terrorist threat in the region should not be underestimated, including in the Sahel region, where the crisis has worsened, demanding the attention of the Security Council on various occasions.

Uruguay is principally concerned by the political situation in the Gambia and in Guinea-Bissau, the political leaders of which are not respecting existing constitutional legal frameworks. Neither are they demonstrating respect for their social commitments or upholding the responsiblities given them by their citizens. In that regard, we welcome the mediation efforts being led by the Economic Community of West African States and the countries of the region. We invite the Presidents of both countries to work towards finding a peaceful solution to that political impasse.

The President: I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.25 a.m.